Issue of Takfir
(Excommunication)

Obstacles of Takfir

The One in Need of Allah

8th of March 2025

Obstacles to Takfir (Declaring Someone a Disbeliever)

1. Ignorance

2. Error

3. Interpretation

4. Coercion

5. Imitation (Following Others Blindly)

6. Inability

7. Taqiyya (Concealing One's Belief)

Excuse of Ignorance is Based on the Evidence of the Quran and Sunnah

Ibn Uthaymeen said:

"As for the excuse of ignorance, this is what the generality of the texts necessitate, and no one can bring forth evidence proving that a person is not excused due to ignorance. Were it not for the excuse of ignorance, there would be no benefit in sending the messengers, and people would be bound solely by their innate nature (fitrah), making the sending of messengers unnecessary. Thus, the excuse of ignorance is established by the evidence from the Quran and Sunnah, as affirmed by the scholars."

First: Evidence from the Quran

1. Allah says:

"And We never punish until We have sent a messenger." (Al-Isra: 15)

2. Allah says:

"If a disaster should strike them for what their hands put forth, they would say, 'Our Lord, why did You not send us a messenger so we could have followed Your verses and been among the believers?'" (Al-Qasas: 47)

3. Allah says:

“Messengers as bringers of good tidings and warners so that mankind will have no argument against Allah after the messengers.” (An-Nisa: 165)

• These verses affirm that Allah does not punish people until He clarifies the truth to them and teaches them the path of guidance. Accountability only follows knowledge.

4. Allah says:

“When the disciples said: ‘O Jesus, son of Mary, can your Lord send down to us a table spread (with food) from the heaven?’ He said, ‘Fear Allah, if you should be believers.’ They said, ‘We wish to eat from it and let our hearts be reassured and know that you have been truthful to us and be among its witnesses.’” (Al-Ma’idah: 113)

• Ibn Hazm said: “These disciples, whom Allah praised, spoke in ignorance when they asked Jesus if his Lord could send down a table from the sky. However, their faith was not invalidated. This is undeniable proof. They would have disbelieved had they said this after the proof had been established and explained to them.”

5. Allah says about the statement of the Children of Israel to Moses:

“Make for us a god just as they have gods.” He said, “Indeed, you are a people behaving ignorantly.” (Al-A’raf: 138)

• Al-Baghawi said: “When the Children of Israel saw the idol-worshipers, they said, ‘O Moses, make for us a god like they have gods.’ This was not due to their doubt in Allah’s oneness but rather their ignorance, thinking that it would not harm their faith to have something to venerate.”

6. Allah says:

“And Allah would not let a people go astray after He had guided them until He makes clear to them what they should avoid. Indeed, Allah is Knowing of all things.” (At-Tawbah: 115)

• Al-Baghawi commented: “This means that Allah does not judge them as misguided until He has first clarified what they must avoid. Once clarification has been given and they persist, then they deserve misguidance.”

7. Allah says:

“And whoever opposes the Messenger after guidance has become clear to him and follows other than the way of the believers, We will turn him to what he has chosen and drive him into Hell – what an evil destination.” (An-Nisa: 115)

• Ibn Kathir said: “This means that whoever deliberately deviates from the way of the Prophet, after the truth has become clear to him, will face the consequences.”

8. Allah says:

“So that those who perished [through disbelief] would perish upon evidence and those who lived [in faith] would live upon evidence. And indeed, Allah is Hearing and Knowing.” (Al-Anfal: 42)

• Al-Baghawi said: “This means that the one who dies in disbelief does so after witnessing clear proof, and the one who believes does so after clear evidence has been established.”

Second: Evidence from the Sunnah

1. Abu Huraira (RA) narrated that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said:

“There was a man who was excessive in sin. When death approached, he said to his sons: ‘When I die, burn me, then grind my ashes, then scatter them in the wind. For by Allah, if my Lord is able to take hold of me, He will punish me like no other has been punished.’ When he died, they did so.

Then Allah commanded the earth, ‘Gather what is in you of him,’ and he was resurrected standing before Him. Allah asked: ‘What made you do this?’ He said: ‘My fear of You, O Lord.’ So, Allah forgave him.” (Agreed upon)

• Ibn Battal said: “Some scholars said he was forgiven because he acted out of ignorance, thinking that what he did was correct. It is not just for Allah to equate someone who mistakenly believes something to be true with someone who deliberately opposes the truth.”

• Ibn Hazm said: “This man was ignorant until his death that Allah is capable of resurrecting him from ashes, yet he was forgiven due to his faith, fear, and ignorance.”

• Ibn Taymiyyah said: “This man believed that Allah could not gather his remains or doubted it, and both beliefs are disbelief. However, he was ignorant, and the knowledge that would have corrected his ignorance had not reached him. Yet, he had faith in Allah, His commands, prohibitions, promises, and warnings, so Allah forgave him due to his fear.”

2. Abu Waqid Al-Laythi (RA) narrated:

“When the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) set out for Hunayn, we passed by a tree that the idolaters used to hang their weapons on. We said: ‘O Messenger of Allah, make for us a Dhat Anwat (tree for hanging weapons) just as they have one.’ He said: ‘SubhanAllah! This is like what the people

of Moses said: Make for us a god just as they have gods. By the One in Whose hand is my soul, you will certainly follow the ways of those before you.'"

• In another narration: "We had recently left disbelief."

• These were ignorant people who had just accepted Islam. They requested something resembling polytheism but had not actually engaged in it. The Prophet (ﷺ) strongly rebuked them, but he did not declare them disbelievers due to their ignorance.

• Muhammad ibn Abdul-Wahhab said:

"If a Muslim, even a scholar, falls into a form of shirk unknowingly, then repents, he is excused. However, some argue that the Children of Israel and the companions who asked for a sacred tree were not declared disbelievers. The response is that they did not actually commit shirk. Had the Children of Israel worshipped the idol, they would have disbelieved. Likewise, had the companions insisted on taking a sacred tree after the Prophet forbade them, they would have disbelieved."

• Ibn Uthaymeen commented:

"If a Muslim utters a statement of disbelief out of ignorance and then repents immediately upon being informed, he is not deemed a disbeliever. This is because he is excused due to his ignorance, and Allah does not burden a soul beyond its capacity. However, if he persists after knowing the truth, then he is judged accordingly."

The Second Requirement: Evidences for Excusing Mistakes

The Ahl al-Sunnah have relied on numerous evidences to establish this principle, including:

1. The Statement of Allah, Exalted is He:

"Call them by (the names of) their fathers; that is more just with Allah. But if you do not know their fathers—then they are your brothers in religion and those entrusted to you. And there is no blame upon you for that in which you erred, but only for what your hearts intended. And ever is Allah Forgiving and Merciful." (Al-Ahzab: 5)

Ibn Kathir commented:

"The statement: 'And there is no blame upon you for that in which you erred'—meaning, if you mistakenly attribute someone to a father who is not his actual father after exerting effort and striving to ascertain the truth, then Allah has removed the burden of sin for this mistake. This

aligns with His guidance when He commands His servants to say: 'Our Lord, do not impose blame upon us if we forget or make a mistake' (Al-Baqarah: 286). It is authentically reported in Sahih Muslim that the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) said: 'Allah has said: I have done so (i.e., granted forgiveness).' And in Sahih al-Bukhari, 'Amr ibn al-As reported that the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said: 'If a judge exercises ijtihad and is correct, he has two rewards; and if he exercises ijtihad and errs, he has one reward.'"

Ibn Hajar stated:

"Ibn al-Tin said that al-Bukhari applied the verse 'And there is no blame upon you for that in which you erred' (Al-Ahzab: 5) to all matters. Others have restricted its application to a specific case—when a man mistakenly calls someone 'my son' while he is not his actual son. Even if we accept that the verse was revealed for this specific reason, that does not prevent deriving a general ruling from it. The scholars have unanimously agreed on applying its general meaning to cases where sin is lifted due to error."

2. The Statement of Allah, Exalted is He:

"And whoever kills a believer intentionally—his recompense is Hell, wherein he will abide eternally, and Allah has become angry with him and has cursed him and has prepared for him a great punishment." (An-Nisa: 93)

This verse restricts the severe warning to intentional killing, and Islamic texts have clearly differentiated between intentional and accidental killing both in worldly rulings and in the Hereafter.

3. The Statement of Allah, Exalted is He:

"Our Lord, do not impose blame upon us if we forget or make a mistake. Our Lord, and do not place upon us a burden like that which You placed upon those before us." (Al-Baqarah: 286)

It is established that Allah responded to this supplication by saying: "I have done so."

4. The Hadith of Ibn Abbas (may Allah be pleased with them both):

The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said:

"Indeed, Allah has removed from my Ummah mistakes, forgetfulness, and what they are coerced into."

Ibn Rajab, in his commentary on this hadith, stated:

“Mistake (خطأ) means intending to do something but the action results in something else, such as when a person intends to kill a disbeliever but mistakenly kills a Muslim. Forgetfulness (نسيان) occurs when a person remembers something but forgets it at the time of action. Both of these are excused in the sense that there is no sin associated with them. However, the lifting of sin does not negate the possibility of legal consequences being enforced, such as when a person mistakenly kills a believer, in which case he is still liable for expiation and blood money, as explicitly stated in the Qur’an. Similarly, if a person mistakenly destroys another’s property, believing it to be his own, he is liable. The stronger opinion—Allah knows best—is that forgetfulness and mistake are excused in the sense that sin is removed because sin is based on intention, and the one who forgets or errs lacks intention. However, the removal of legal consequences is not necessarily intended by these texts; for that, separate evidence is required.”

5. The Famous Hadith About the Man from Banu Israel (previously mentioned among the evidences for excusing ignorance):

Al-Nawawi, in his commentary on this hadith, stated:

“Scholars have differed in interpreting this hadith… Some said that the statement should be taken at face value, but the man uttered it in a state where he was not fully aware of his words nor intentionally affirming its meaning. Rather, he said it in a moment of extreme distress, fear, and intense anxiety, which caused him to lose full awareness and mindfulness of what he was saying, making him similar to one who speaks without thinking due to distraction or forgetfulness. Such a person is not held accountable. This is similar to the statement of another man who was overwhelmed by joy upon finding his lost mount, and mistakenly said: ‘O Allah, You are my servant, and I am Your Lord.’ He was not deemed sinful due to the overwhelming happiness and the loss of control over his words.”

Ibn Hajar, after citing multiple interpretations, stated:

“The strongest opinion is that the man said this in a state of shock and overwhelming fear, which impaired his rational thinking. He did not intend the literal meaning of his words; rather, he was in a condition akin to one who is heedless, distracted, or forgetful, for whom accountability is lifted.”

Ibn Taymiyyah commented:

“This man believed that Allah could not reassemble him if he were burned and scattered, or he doubted it, and such a belief is indeed disbelief (kufr). A person who has been presented with the proof and still holds this belief is a disbeliever. However, this man was ignorant of this matter, and knowledge had not reached him to correct his ignorance. At the same time, he had faith in Allah, His commands, prohibitions, promises, and warnings. He feared Allah’s punishment, and so Allah

forgave him due to his fear. Therefore, if a believer in Allah, His Messenger, and the Last Day makes an error in some matters of belief, Allah may forgive his mistake, or He may punish him if he was negligent in seeking the truth—according to the extent of his faith. However, to declare someone a disbeliever simply because of a mistake in such matters, despite knowing their overall faith, is a grave error."

This exposition comprehensively establishes the principle that unintentional mistakes do not carry sin, though their legal consequences may still apply, and that ignorance in certain matters—particularly when combined with sincerity and fear of Allah—may be excused by His mercy.

This hadith is frequently cited by Ibn Taymiyyah in matters of excuse due to ignorance, error, and misinterpretation.

This man made a mistake and spoke words of disbelief unintentionally due to his ignorance, but Allah Almighty pardoned him because the proof had not been established against him. Using this as evidence for excusing misinterpretation is even stronger, as the one who misinterprets is essentially an earnest seeker of the truth who makes a mistake. If someone who errs without striving for understanding is not deemed a disbeliever—as in this story—then it is even more fitting that someone who exerted effort in seeking the truth but erred should not be deemed a disbeliever.

Regarding this meaning, Ibn al-Wazir states:

"The verses and hadiths about pardoning mistakes have multiplied, and it is apparent that those who misinterpret have erred, and there is no way to ascertain their deliberate intention."

Then he mentioned some evidences supporting the excuse of error, including the story of the man from the Children of Israel, and then commented:

"He was granted mercy because of his ignorance and his faith in Allah and the Hereafter; that is why he feared punishment. ... This is the most hopeful hadith for those who err in interpretation."

6. 'Amr ibn al-'As (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that he heard the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) say:

"When a judge makes a ruling and strives in ijtihad and is correct, he will have two rewards. If he rules and strives but makes a mistake, he will have one reward."

Al-Khatib al-Baghdadi said:

“If it is asked: How can a person who makes an error receive a reward for his mistake, when it would seem more appropriate for him to be sinful due to his negligence and carelessness in ijtihad, leading to his mistake? The answer is that this is a misunderstanding. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) did not grant the mistaken person a reward for his mistake, but rather for his effort in ijtihad. He was pardoned for his mistake because he did not intend it. As for the one who is correct, he receives a reward for his ijtihad and another for being correct.”

Ibn Taymiyyah said:

“If a person’s mistake is due to negligence in following the Qur’an and faith, or due to transgressing Allah’s limits by taking forbidden paths, or due to following his desires without guidance from Allah—then he is wronging himself and is among those warned. However, if someone strives in obedience to Allah and His Messenger, inwardly and outwardly, seeking the truth through his effort as commanded by Allah and His Messenger, then his error is forgiven.”

He also said:

“As for takfir (declaring someone a disbeliever), the correct view is that if someone from the Ummah of Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) strives to find the truth but makes a mistake, he is not a disbeliever. Rather, his mistake is forgiven. However, if someone recognizes the truth brought by the Messenger and then opposes him after guidance has been made clear and follows a path other than that of the believers, then he is a disbeliever. If someone follows his desires, falls short in seeking the truth, and speaks without knowledge, then he is a sinner. He may be a wrongdoer, but he may also have good deeds that outweigh his sins.”

He also said:

“No one has the right to declare any Muslim a disbeliever merely because he made a mistake or was wrong until the proof has been established against him and the evidence clarified. If someone’s Islam was established with certainty, it does not cease due to doubt; rather, it only ceases after the proof has been established and the doubt removed.”

7. Anas ibn Malik (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) said:

“Allah is more delighted with the repentance of His servant than one of you would be if he were in a barren land, lost his mount carrying his food and drink, then gave up hope, lay down under a tree, and suddenly found it standing beside him. He then took its reins and, out of intense joy, mistakenly said: ‘O Allah, You are my servant and I am Your Lord.’”

Qadi 'Iyad commented:

"His statement: 'O Allah, You are my servant and I am Your Lord,' shows that if someone speaks in a state of overwhelming emotion and confusion, they are not held accountable, Allah willing."

Ibn al-Qayyim said:

"Allah has lifted accountability from one who internally contemplates something without verbalizing or acting upon it, just as He has lifted accountability from someone who utters words involuntarily without intending their meaning. This is why a person does not disbelieve if words of disbelief slip from their tongue without intention, due to extreme joy, confusion, or similar conditions, as in the hadith about divine joy at a servant's repentance."

He also said:

"Mistakes, forgetfulness, inadvertence, slips of the tongue, involuntary speech, coercion, and ignorance of meanings are all part of human nature. No person can completely avoid them. If legal rulings were applied to such cases, it would cause great hardship and difficulty for the Ummah. Thus, Allah lifted accountability for all these cases, including unintentional speech due to extreme joy, anger, or drunkenness, as demonstrated by the supporting evidences. Likewise, mistake, forgetfulness, coercion, ignorance of meanings, slips of the tongue, speech in moments of distress, and oaths taken inadvertently—these ten cases do not lead to divine punishment because they lack deliberate intent and conviction."

The texts of the Qur'an and Sunnah overwhelmingly establish that those who make mistakes are excused, and their ruling is the same as that of the ignorant and those who misinterpret. Thus, no one is deemed a disbeliever until proof has been established against them. If they were negligent, they are sinful for their negligence. If they were not negligent, they are not held accountable—whether the issue is in beliefs, legal rulings, fundamentals, or secondary matters.

Ibn Taymiyyah said:

"The leading jurists, such as Abu Hanifa, al-Shafi'i, al-Thawri, Dawud ibn Ali, and others, did not deem a mujtahid who made a mistake sinful, whether in theological or jurisprudential matters, as Ibn Hazm and others have noted. That is why Abu Hanifa, al-Shafi'i, and others accepted the testimony of those with theological disagreements, except the Khattaabiya, and allowed prayer behind them. A disbeliever's testimony is not accepted against Muslims, nor is prayer performed behind him.

This is the well-known position of the Companions, their followers, and the leading scholars of Islam: They did not declare as disbelievers, sinners, or wrongdoers anyone who made a mistake

in ijtihad, whether in theoretical or practical matters. The distinction between theological and jurisprudential issues originated from the people of innovation—such as the Mu'tazilites and Jahmites—and was then adopted by some who spoke on legal theory without fully understanding the issue.

Distinguishing between theological and jurisprudential issues in this manner is an innovation in Islam with no basis in the Qur'an, Sunnah, or consensus of scholars. It was never claimed by any of the early scholars or jurists. Furthermore, their distinctions are invalid because they fail to provide a sound, clear differentiation between these two categories."**

He also said:

"Many of the Salaf made mistakes on various issues, yet they unanimously agreed not to declare one another disbelievers. Some Companions denied that the dead could hear the living, some denied the physical Ascension (Mi'raj), some denied the Prophet's vision of Allah, and some made statements regarding leadership, fighting, and cursing that were well known.

The judge Shurayh denied the reading of the verse, 'Rather, I am amazed, and they ridicule' (Surah As-Saffat: 12), saying, 'Allah does not feel amazement.' This was an error regarding a confirmed reading of the Qur'an and an attribute established in the Qur'an and Sunnah. Yet, the Ummah agreed that he was an esteemed scholar.

Likewise, some early scholars rejected certain Quranic readings, and some even removed the Mu'awwidhatayn, though they later accepted the correct view when the evidence was established for them."

The meaning of "ta'wul" (interpretation) here refers to falling into disbelief unintentionally due to a misunderstanding of religious evidence, rather than a deliberate rejection. This occurs when a person believes they are following the truth but lacks a proper understanding of the proofs.

Ibn Hajar said:

"The scholars have stated that anyone who misinterprets religious texts in a justifiable way is not sinful if their interpretation is linguistically plausible and has a scholarly basis."

Al-'Ayni said:

"There is no disagreement among scholars that anyone who misinterprets (ta'wul) a religious matter in a justifiable way is excused and not blamed, as long as their interpretation is linguistically sound or has a scholarly basis."

One of the strongest proofs for excusing misinterpretation is the story of Hatib ibn Abi Balta'ah:

Ali (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated:

"The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) sent me, along with Az-Zubair and Al-Miqdad, saying: 'Go to the garden of Khakh, for there is a woman there with a letter; take it from her.' We set out on our horses until we found her in the designated place. We said, 'Give us the letter.' She denied having it, so we warned her, 'Either you hand it over, or we will strip your clothing.' She then pulled it out from her hair. We brought it to the Prophet (peace be upon him), and it contained information from Hatib ibn Abi Balta'ah to some of the polytheists in Makkah, informing them of certain matters related to the Prophet (peace be upon him).

The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) asked, 'O Hatib, what is this?' He replied, 'O Messenger of Allah, do not hasten in judgment against me. I was a man attached to the Quraysh but not one of their own. The other Muhajirun (immigrants) have blood relations in Makkah who protect their families and wealth. I do not have such ties, so I wanted to gain favor with them to protect my relatives. I did not do this out of disbelief, apostasy, or acceptance of kufr after Islam.'

The Prophet (peace be upon him) said, 'He has spoken the truth.' Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) said, 'O Messenger of Allah, allow me to strike the neck of this hypocrite!' The Prophet (peace be upon him) replied, 'He participated in the Battle of Badr. How do you know? Perhaps Allah has looked upon the people of Badr and said: "Do as you will, for I have forgiven you."'"

Al-Khattabi commented:

"This hadith proves that the ruling on someone who violates a prohibition due to misinterpretation differs from that of someone who does so deliberately. If someone commits a prohibited act and claims an interpretation that is plausible, their claim is accepted—even if the stronger opinion is against them. Notice how, in Hatib's case, both possibilities existed: Umar believed he was guilty of hypocrisy, while Hatib provided an alternative explanation. The Prophet (peace be upon him) chose to assume the best and accepted Hatib's claim."

Ibn al-Jawzi said:

"Hatib was from the Lakhm tribe and had settled in Makkah. He migrated and left his family behind. To ensure their safety, he sought to gain favor with the Quraysh by revealing part of the Prophet's plans against them. However, he knew that this would not harm the Prophet, as Allah

had promised His support. His action was thus based on a plausible interpretation, which is why the Prophet (peace be upon him) assumed the best about him and said, ‘He has spoken the truth.’

This hadith shows that the ruling on someone who violates a prohibition due to misinterpretation is different from that of someone who does so deliberately. Umar called him a hypocrite, which could have two meanings:

1. Umar interpreted it based on the verse: “You will not find people who believe in Allah and the Last Day having affection for those who oppose Allah and His Messenger.” (Al-Mujadilah 22)

2. Or he meant hypocrisy in terms of ingratitude (kufr al-ni‘mah).

In some narrations, Umar says, ‘Let me strike the neck of this hypocrite!’ This was because he saw an outward resemblance to hypocrisy. However, because Umar’s interpretation was plausible, the Prophet (peace be upon him) did not rebuke him.”

Ibn al-Mulaqqin said:

“Umar called Hatib a hypocrite because he appeared to be allying with the disbelievers of Quraysh. However, Hatib did this under a misinterpretation, believing it would not harm the Prophet.”

Imam Al-Bukhari included a chapter in his Sahih:

“Chapter: Those who do not declare as disbelievers (kuffar) those who misinterpret or are ignorant.”

Then he quoted the hadith where Umar called Hatib a hypocrite, but the Prophet (peace be upon him) responded, “How do you know? Perhaps Allah has forgiven the people of Badr.”

Shams al-Din al-Birmawi stated:

“Someone who mistakenly declares another a disbeliever is excused and not sinful. This is why the Prophet (peace be upon him) excused Umar for calling Hatib a hypocrite, as it was based on interpretation.”

Thus, valid misinterpretation (ta’wul) is a recognized factor in takfir (declaring someone a disbeliever) and in matters of divine punishment.

Ibn Hazm said:

"If a Muslim receives a clear command from the Prophet (peace be upon him) through authentic sources, but misinterprets it due to another text he considers stronger, then unless the truth has been established against him, he is excused and even rewarded for his sincere effort to follow the truth. However, if the truth is made clear to him and he persists in opposition, then he is either declared a disbeliever or a sinner, as appropriate."

Ibn Taymiyyah stated:

"Hadiths that contain warnings must be applied, believing that the person who commits the act is indeed warned of divine punishment. However, applying that punishment to them depends on conditions and impediments.

For example, it is authentically reported that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: 'Allah has cursed the one who consumes riba (usury), the one who pays it, its witnesses, and its scribe.' Similarly, he told a man who exchanged two measures of grain for one: 'This is the essence of riba!' Yet, some scholars, like Ibn Abbas and his followers, misunderstood this issue and permitted some forms of riba due to a misinterpretation. Can it be said that they are included in the curse? No, because their interpretation was valid, even if mistaken."

Ibn Taymiyyah further said:

"Early scholars and the majority of jurists ruled that if rebels (ahl al-baghy) fought the rightful leader based on an incorrect but plausible interpretation, they were not required to pay blood money or expiate, even though their actions were sinful."

He also said:

"Takfir is a form of divine punishment. However, a person may be new to Islam, raised in an isolated place, or unaware of certain teachings. Such a person does not become a disbeliever until the proof has been established against them. Even if they hear the texts, they may not believe them to be authentic, misunderstand them, or be influenced by doubts. If a believer sincerely seeks the truth but errs, Allah forgives them, whether in doctrinal or practical matters."

Ibn al-Wazir commented:

"The Quranic verse 'But whoever opens their heart to disbelief...' (An-Nahl 106) proves that those who err due to misinterpretation are not disbelievers because their hearts have not willingly embraced disbelief."

As-Sa‘di added:

“Those who err in understanding scripture while still believing in the Messenger and accepting his truth are not to be declared disbelievers. The Quran and Sunnah affirm this, and the consensus of the Companions and leading scholars supports it.”

Not everyone who claims interpretation (ta’wil) is automatically excused; rather, this interpretation must not concern the fundamental principles of religion—namely, the worship of Allah alone without partners and the acceptance of His Sharia. This fundamental principle (the two testimonies of faith) cannot be upheld while entertaining doubts about it.

For this reason, scholars unanimously agreed on the disbelief (kufr) of the Batiniyyah sect and did not excuse them based on interpretation, as their doctrine is essentially disbelief in Allah, rejection of His worship, and the abolishment of Islamic laws.

Habeeb ibn al-Rabee’ said:

“Claiming interpretation for an explicit text is not acceptable.”

Abu al-Qasim al-Isbahani said:

“If an interpreter (muta’awwil) makes a mistake while being among the people of faith, his interpretation is examined. If it leads to contradicting a part of the Book of Allah, a definitive Sunnah that removes doubt, or a consensus (ijma’), then he becomes a disbeliever and is not excused, because the doubt he clings to is weak and does not have sufficient strength to justify an excuse. If an issue is clearly established by one of these sources, it is highly evident and clear. Since a person who adopts such a belief could have easily grasped the truth without ambiguity, he is not excused for deviating from it. Instead, his stance is considered obstinacy and persistence. However, if someone ignorantly opposes a fundamental belief without intending obstinate rejection, he does not become a disbeliever because he did not deliberately choose disbelief or approve of it. He exerted his effort but arrived at an incorrect conclusion. Allah has made it clear that He does not punish except after clarification and does not hold people accountable without prior warning, as He says:

‘And Allah would not let a people stray after He has guided them until He makes clear to them what they should avoid.’ [Surah At-Tawbah: 115]

So, anyone whom Allah has guided and entered into the fold of Islam does not exit into disbelief except after receiving clear proof."

Ibn Taymiyyah said:

"Clarification of rulings occurs in different ways: sometimes through a clear, emphatic text, sometimes through a clear but unelaborated text, and sometimes through a text that may be misunderstood by some people, depending on Allah's will and wisdom. All of this falls under the category of 'clear communication' (balagh mubeen). It is not a condition of 'clear communication' that no one finds it ambiguous, for this is impossible to regulate. People's intellects and desires differ greatly—some receive knowledge while others do not, either due to their own negligence or their incapacity. The duty of the Messenger is to deliver the message in the clearest way possible, and—praise be to Allah—he fulfilled this duty. He left the Ummah upon a clear path, its night as bright as its day, from which only the doomed deviate."

Ibn al-Wazir said:

"There is no disagreement regarding the disbelief of those who deny what is necessarily known to all Muslims and who falsely claim interpretation for matters that cannot be interpreted—such as the heretics (mulhidun) who reinterpret all the Divine Names, the entire Qur'an, the Islamic laws, and the Afterlife, including resurrection, judgment, Paradise, and Hell. The real issue arises in judging those who uphold the five pillars of Islam but deny what is necessarily known to some or most, not necessarily to them personally. If such a person interprets matters wrongly and we observe from their circumstances that they do not intend to deny the truth, or if their stance remains unclear, and they demonstrate faith and belief in all the prophets and divine books while holding extremely erroneous beliefs contradicting clear evidence—whether rational or textual—then they have not reached the level of absolute heretics."

He also said:

"Anyone who denies a revealed text or rejects it becomes a disbeliever—provided they are someone who necessarily knows of its authenticity. The discussion concerns those Islamic groups that affirm the revelation but differ in interpretation.

Among them, only those whose interpretations amount to outright denial—though they disguise it as interpretation to deceive Muslims and undermine the religion—are considered disbelievers, such as the Qarmatians, who denied that Allah possesses the attributes of existence, knowledge,

and power, among others, which the entire Ummah necessarily knows the Prophet (peace be upon him) affirmed in their apparent meaning."

Ali al-Qari said:

"Whoever interprets the texts concerning bodily resurrection, the creation of the universe, and Allah's knowledge of particulars in a manner that contradicts their apparent meaning is a disbeliever, as these matters are definitively known in religion to be as they are stated. This differs from the issue of whether major sinners remain in Hell forever, as there is textual evidence supporting both views."

Al-Sa'di said:

*"The decisive ruling on such innovators who oppose clear and authentic texts varies:

1. If someone knowingly opposes the Qur'an and Sunnah, follows his innovation, and disregards divine guidance, then he is undoubtedly a disbeliever.

2. If someone is content with his innovation, neglects seeking the necessary religious knowledge, and actively defends his views while rejecting what the Qur'an and Sunnah affirm—despite his ignorance and misguidance—then he is a wrongdoer (zalim) and evildoer (fasiq), according to how much truth he has abandoned.

3. Others are less extreme than this.

4. Some sincerely seek the truth but fail to find a proper guide to explain it to them. They hold mistaken beliefs but do not oppose the truth out of hostility. Such individuals may be excused for their errors—Allah knows best."*

He also said:

"The key consideration in this matter is distinguishing cases where scholars unequivocally declared certain views as disbelief due to the lack of any valid excuse, from cases where they refrained from ruling outright disbelief because of the multiple interpretations involved."

Ibn Hazm said:

*"Some sects have claimed the name of Islam, yet all Muslim groups unanimously agree they are not truly Muslim. For example:

• Some extremist Kharijites claimed that prayer consists only of one rak'ah in the morning and one in the evening.

• Others rejected Surah Yusuf as part of the Qur'an.

• Some extreme Mu'tazilites adopted the belief in the transmigration of souls.

• Others claimed that prophethood could be attained through righteous deeds.

• Some Sunnis went to extremes, saying there could be righteous people superior to the prophets and angels, and that those who attain true knowledge of Allah are no longer required to observe religious obligations.

• Some claimed that Allah resides within the bodies of His creation."*

Ruling on Those Who Misinterpret (Muta'awwilun)

The general ruling on those who misinterpret religious texts is that they are treated like the ignorant—sometimes even more excusably. An ignorant person simply lacks knowledge of the truth, whereas an interpreter not only lacks the truth but also believes that his misinterpretation is correct. Someone who is ignorant due to a lack of knowledge is considered accountable once the truth reaches them. However, an interpreter who clings to misconceptions may require the removal of their doubts before accountability is established. If they receive the truth while still being influenced by doubts, they may still be excused unless they knowingly reject clear evidence.

Muhammad ibn Nasr al-Marwazi narrated from Tariq ibn Shihab, who said:

"I was present with Ali when he had finished fighting the Khawarij at Nahrawan. Someone asked him, 'Are they polytheists?' He replied, 'They fled from polytheism.' The person then asked, 'Are they hypocrites?' Ali replied, 'Hypocrites rarely remember Allah.' The person asked, 'Then what are they?' Ali responded, 'They are a people who rebelled against us, so we fought them.'"

Excusing someone due to misinterpretation, even if they have received the truth, as long as they do not reject it outright or deliberately oppose it, was the approach of the early scholars.

They would declare certain beliefs as disbelief in general terms but would not always apply that ruling to specific individuals—such as Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal, who declared the belief in the

“creation of the Qur’an” to be disbelief yet did not necessarily excommunicate every person who espoused it.

Ibn Taymiyyah explained:

“Declaring a belief as disbelief in general does not mean that every individual who holds that belief is a disbeliever, unless the conditions for disbelief are met and its impediments are absent.”

Then, Imam Ahmad prayed for the caliph and others who had harmed and imprisoned him, and he sought forgiveness for them and absolved them of what they had done to him in terms of oppression and compelling him to say what is disbelief. If they had been apostates from Islam, it would not have been permissible to seek forgiveness for them, for seeking forgiveness for disbelievers is not allowed according to the Book, the Sunnah, and consensus. These statements and actions from him and other imams clearly indicate that they did not declare as disbelievers the specific Jahmiyyah individuals who said, “The Qur’an is created” and “Allah will not be seen in the Hereafter.”

It has been reported from Imam Ahmad that he did declare certain individuals as disbelievers, so either it is said that there are two different narrations from him on this matter—which requires further examination—or the matter is understood with detail: those whom he declared as disbelievers specifically were those for whom the evidence was established that the conditions of takfir (declaring someone a disbeliever) were met and the impediments were absent, while those he did not declare as disbelievers specifically were due to the absence of those conditions in their case. This is alongside his general statement that their belief is disbelief. The evidence for this principle comes from the Book, the Sunnah, consensus, and rational consideration.

He also said:

“Imam Ahmad, may Allah be pleased with him, showed mercy to them and sought forgiveness for them because he knew that it had not become clear to them that they were denying the Messenger or rejecting what he brought, but rather they had misinterpreted and erred, and they followed those who said this to them.”

Likewise, Ibn Taymiyyah did not declare the Jahmiyyah who debated him in his time as disbelievers, despite making it clear that their belief was disbelief.

Ibn Taymiyyah said:

“I used to say to the Jahmiyyah among the Hulooliyyah (those who believe Allah is present within creation) and the deniers who rejected that Allah is above the Throne when their tribulation occurred: ‘If I were to agree with you, I would be a disbeliever, because I know that your

statement is disbelief. However, you are not disbelievers in my view because you are ignorant.' This was my address to their scholars, judges, elders, and rulers. The root of their ignorance was intellectual doubts that arose in the minds of their leaders due to their deficiency in understanding the soundly transmitted texts and rational proofs that align with them."

He also said:

"A misinterpreting person who intends to follow the Messenger, peace be upon him, is not declared a disbeliever, nor even a sinner if he strives and errs. This is well known among people regarding practical matters. As for matters of belief, many have declared those who err in them as disbelievers, but this opinion is not known from any of the Companions, the Followers, or any of the Imams of the Muslims. Rather, it originates from the people of innovation, who invent innovations and then declare as disbelievers those who oppose them, such as the Khawarij, the Mu'tazilah, and the Jahmiyyah."

This established principle is the methodology of Ahl al-Sunnah, who are the most knowledgeable about the truth and the most merciful towards creation.

As for other sects, they have been excessive in declaring their opponents as disbelievers, based on their assumption that their own beliefs are absolute foundations that no one can be excused for opposing, whether due to doubt or otherwise. They have fallen into extreme contradictions without any clear standard, declaring their opponents as disbelievers even over minor hidden issues, let alone apparent ones, and even due to logical implications rather than explicit beliefs. In fact, most of what they declare as disbelief is not actually disbelief according to the original legal ruling.

The reluctance to categorically declare as disbelievers those who misinterpret due to a doubt—even if their misinterpretation itself is disbelief—is based on a fundamental principle: when someone has been established as a Muslim with certainty, ruling on their disbelief due to misinterpretation lacks clear proof from the Book or the Sunnah. Our rulings are based on outward appearances, and the outward state of such a person does not decisively indicate disbelief.

The majority of scholars in the principles of Islamic jurisprudence and jurists have classified coercion into two types:

1. Complete (Compelling) Coercion:

This occurs when the coercion directly affects the person being coerced, leaving them with no ability or choice.

For example, if a person is threatened with death, the amputation of a limb, severe beating that could lead to their demise, or the complete destruction of their wealth, and they strongly believe that the threat will be carried out, then they are permitted to act in accordance with the threat due to being in a state of legal necessity.

2. Incomplete (Non-Compelling) Coercion:

This involves threats or intimidation with something less than the destruction of life or a limb.

For example, being threatened with beating, imprisonment, shackling, or the partial destruction of wealth. This type of coercion invalidates consent but does not eliminate choice, as the person is not absolutely forced to comply; they have the ability to endure the threatened harm.

Additionally, under this category, there is debate regarding whether coercion extends to threats made against a person's father, son, wife, sister, mother, or brother.

From an analytical perspective, this type of coercion should not be considered valid coercion because the harm does not directly affect the coerced individual. The fundamental principle in recognizing coercion is that the threat must cause fear, hardship, and distress to the coerced person themselves.

However, from the perspective of discretionary judgment (istihsan), this is considered coercion because the coerced person experiences extreme distress, worry, grief, and hardship when a close family member is harmed, which compels them to comply with the demands as if they themselves were directly affected.

Ibn Qudamah said:

"If a person is threatened with the torture of their child, some say this is not coercion because the harm affects someone else. However, the correct view is that it does constitute coercion because such a threat is more severe for a person than having their wealth taken, and since threats against one's property are considered coercion, so should this be."

Al-Mardawi said:

“Striking or imprisoning one’s child or similar actions constitute coercion against the parent, according to the correct view in the Hanbali school, as affirmed in ‘Al-Furu’ and ‘Al-Qawa’id Al-Usuliyyah’ and other sources.”

Another Classification of Coercion:

Coercion can also be classified based on its impact:

1. Compulsion (Iilja’):

• In this case, both consent and choice are eliminated, and the will and intent are absent.

• This occurs under extreme torture or similar circumstances.

• Example from the Qur’an:

• This is the type of coercion referred to in the verse:

“Whoever disbelieves in Allah after having believed—except for one who is coerced while his heart remains firm in faith…” (Surah An-Nahl: 106).

• Example from Hadith:

• Muhammad ibn Ammar ibn Yasir narrated that the polytheists captured Ammar ibn Yasir and did not release him until he insulted the Prophet ﷺ and spoke well of their idols.

• When he returned to the Prophet ﷺ, he said, “What happened with you?” Ammar replied, “It was bad, O Messenger of Allah! They did not release me until I spoke ill of you and praised their idols.”

• The Prophet ﷺ asked, “How do you find your heart?” Ammar replied, “Steadfast in faith.”

• The Prophet ﷺ said, “If they do it again, then you may do the same.”

• Ibn Hajar said, “It is agreed upon that the verse (Surah An-Nahl: 106) was revealed about Ammar.”

2. Threat (Tahdeed):

• In this case, consent is absent, but choice is not completely eliminated.

• This applies when a person chooses the lesser of two harms.

• Example from the Qur’an:

• The case of Prophet Shu’ayb عليه السلام when his people threatened him, saying:

“The arrogant chiefs of his people said, ‘O Shu’ayb, we will surely expel you and those who have believed with you from our town, unless you return to our religion.’” (Surah Al-A’raf: 88-89).

• Interpretation by Ibn Kathir:

• “This verse narrates the response of the disbelievers to Prophet Shu’ayb and his followers, where they threatened them with expulsion from the city unless they returned to their former religion. Although the address was directed to the Prophet, it included his followers as well. Shu’ayb’s response indicated that returning to disbelief would be a great falsehood against Allah.”

• Another Qur’anic example:

• “And among the people are those who say, ‘We believe in Allah,’ but when they suffer for the sake of Allah, they consider the persecution of people as equal to the punishment of Allah…” (Surah Al-Ankabut: 10).

• Interpretation by Al-Baghawi:

• “This verse refers to hypocrites who, when faced with suffering for their faith, abandon it, treating human persecution as though it were divine punishment. However, if victory comes to the believers, they claim, ‘We were with you.’”

• Interpretation by As-Sa’di:

• “This passage describes those who worship Allah on the edge of faith: if things go well, they remain steadfast, but if hardship befalls them, they turn away, losing both this world and the Hereafter.”

3. Weakness (Istid’af):

• This does not involve direct torture or threats, but rather being forced into a particular situation by others, as was the case for Muslims who remained in Mecca after the migration to Medina.

• Such individuals are excused due to their inability to escape.

• Example from the Qur'an:

• "Except for the weak among the men, women, and children who cannot devise a plan nor find a way out. For these, it is hoped that Allah will forgive them, for Allah is Ever-Pardoning, Ever-Forgiving." (Surah An-Nisa: 98-99).

• Interpretation by Al-Wahidi:

• "This refers to those who were unable to migrate due to weakness. Ibn Abbas stated that they were Muslims who could not leave Mecca, so Allah excused them. Ibn Abbas himself and his mother were among those whom Allah excused."

• Explanation by Ibn Taymiyyah:

• "I analyzed the various legal positions and found that coercion differs based on what one is coerced into doing. The level of coercion necessary to excuse uttering words of disbelief is different from that required in matters like giving a gift. Imam Ahmad explicitly stated in multiple places that coercion to commit disbelief must involve physical torture, such as beating or imprisonment, and that mere verbal threats do not constitute sufficient coercion."

Thus, coercion in Islamic jurisprudence is a nuanced topic, with scholars differentiating between compelling coercion, non-compelling coercion, threats, and situations of weakness, each carrying its own legal implications.

Ibn Hajar said:

"The conditions of coercion are four:

1. The one exerting coercion must be capable of carrying out what he threatens, and the one being coerced must be incapable of defending himself, even by fleeing.

2. It must be predominantly expected that if the person refuses, the threatened harm will be inflicted upon him.

3. The threat must be immediate; if someone says, 'If you do not do such-and-such, I will beat you tomorrow,' this does not constitute coercion—except if the specified time is very close or if it is customary that such a threat is not left unfulfilled.

4. The coerced person must not show any indication that he is willingly choosing to comply.

There is no difference between coercion in speech and in action according to the majority of scholars. However, an exception is made for actions that are permanently forbidden, such as unlawfully killing another person."

Al-Khazin said:

"Scholars have stated that the coercion which permits a person to utter a word of disbelief is that he must be subjected to a torment he cannot endure, such as threats of death, severe beating, or intense forms of torture, such as being burned with fire and similar punishments... They have unanimously agreed that if a person is coerced into disbelief, he is not allowed to explicitly utter a statement of disbelief. Instead, he should use ambiguous words or statements that could be interpreted as disbelief. However, if he is forced to explicitly declare disbelief, this becomes permissible on the condition that his heart remains firm in faith and he does not believe in the words he utters. Even so, if he chooses to endure torture until he is killed, that is more virtuous, because Yāsir and Sumayyah were killed but did not utter a word of disbelief, and because Bilal endured torture."

The polytheists used to torture Bilal, may Allah be pleased with him, to the extent that they would place a large rock on his chest in the extreme heat and order him to associate partners with Allah, but he would refuse and say: "One, One." He also said: "By Allah, if I knew a word that would anger you more than this, I would say it!"

Likewise, when Habib ibn Zayd al-Ansari was brought before Musaylimah the Liar, Musaylimah asked him, "Do you testify that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah?" He replied, "Yes." Then Musaylimah asked, "Do you testify that I am the messenger of Allah?" He responded, "I do not hear." Musaylimah continued cutting him into pieces while he remained steadfast.

Similarly, Abdullah ibn Hudhafah al-Sahmi, when he was captured by the Romans, was brought before their king. The king said to him, "Convert to Christianity, and I will share my kingdom with you and marry you to my daughter." Abdullah replied, "Even if you gave me everything you own and everything the Arabs own in exchange for renouncing the religion of Muhammad for a blink of an eye, I would not do it."

The king said, "Then I will kill you." Abdullah replied, "That is up to you."

So the king ordered him to be crucified and commanded archers to shoot arrows near his hands and feet while repeatedly offering him Christianity, but he refused. Then the king ordered that a large cauldron, in some reports a copper vessel, be heated, and he brought in a Muslim prisoner and threw him into it before Abdullah's eyes until only bones remained. The king again offered Christianity to Abdullah, but he refused. Then the king ordered that Abdullah be thrown into the

cauldron, and he was lifted on a pulley to be cast into it. At that moment, Abdullah began to cry. The king thought he had given in and called him back.

The king asked, “Why did you cry?”

Abdullah replied, “I cried because I only have one soul, and it will be thrown into this cauldron now for the sake of Allah. I wished that I had as many souls as the number of hairs on my body so that each one could endure this torment in Allah’s cause.”

According to some narrations, the king imprisoned him and deprived him of food and drink for several days.

Then, the king sent him wine and pork, but Abdullah did not touch them. When the king summoned him and asked, “Why did you not eat?”

Abdullah replied, “It was made permissible for me (due to necessity), but I did not want to let you take pleasure in my misfortune.”

Then the king said, “Kiss my head, and I will release you.”

Abdullah asked, “And will you also release the Muslim prisoners with me?”

The king said, “Yes.”

So Abdullah kissed his head, and the king released him along with all the Muslim prisoners.

When Abdullah returned, Umar ibn al-Khattab said, “It is the right of every Muslim to kiss the head of Abdullah ibn Hudhafah, and I will start.” So he stood up and kissed his head.

First Section: Concealing Faith Under Duress

The fundamental principle for a Muslim is to practice and openly display their religion without concealment. This is an obligation. However, in certain places, a person may not be able to do so without facing harm or being coerced away from their faith. In such cases, migration to a land where they can freely practice their religion becomes obligatory.

Imam Al-Shafi’i said:

“The Sunnah of the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) indicates that migration is only obligatory for those who are able to do so and are being persecuted for their faith in a land where they cannot practice it safely. This is because the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) permitted some people to remain in Mecca after embracing Islam, including Al-Abbas ibn Abdul Muttalib and others, as long as they did not fear persecution. He would instruct his armies to say to those who embraced Islam: ‘If you migrate, you will have the same rights as the Muhajirun (migrants), but if you remain, you will be like the Bedouins (i.e., without the privileges of migration).’ He did not give them a choice except in what was permissible for them.”

If a Muslim fears persecution and cannot migrate, then it is permissible for them to conceal their faith and avoid openly practicing it to prevent being forced away from Islam. However, they must still hold firmly to their beliefs in private and must not align themselves with the disbelievers in their disbelief or in sinful acts—except under coercion that permits such actions.

In such cases, it suffices for the person to reject disbelief in their heart, which means to detest disbelief and its people and not be pleased with them or their actions. This is because they are unable to express their rejection through words or actions. This understanding aligns with the statement of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him):

“Whoever among you sees an evil, let him change it with his hand. If he cannot, then with his tongue. If he cannot, then with his heart, and that is the weakest of faith.”

Ibn Daqiq al-’Id commented:

“Its meaning is that one should reject the evil in their heart. This does not entail removing or changing it physically, but rather it refers to what is within a person’s capability… This hadith serves as evidence that if a person fears being killed or beaten, they are excused from taking action. This is the view of the true scholars, both past and present. However, a group of extremists holds that action remains obligatory even if one fears harm.”

As for those who have the ability to denounce wrongdoing publicly but fail to do so, they are sinful for neglecting their duty. However, merely failing to object when able does not render one a disbeliever unless they commit an explicit act of disbelief through words or deeds.

Second Section: Concealing Faith by Pretending to Disbelieve

It is never permissible to openly display disbelief or sin without coercion under the claim of taqiyyah (concealment).

For this reason, when Hatib ibn Abi Balta’ah (may Allah be pleased with him) wrote to the disbelievers of Quraysh informing them about the Prophet’s (peace and blessings be upon him)

march towards the conquest of Mecca, the Prophet (peace be upon him) did not excuse him. Even Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) said, “He has committed hypocrisy!” However, the Prophet (peace be upon him) investigated his case because his action could have been an act of disbelief and apostasy from Islam, or it could have been a mere sin that did not remove him from the religion. When the Prophet (peace be upon him) found that Hatib had written to Quraysh as a form of diplomacy and appeasement, and as taqiyyah to protect his wealth and family in Mecca, without aiding the polytheists or allying with them in their religion, the Prophet (peace be upon him) did not declare him a disbeliever. Instead, his sin was forgiven because of his great virtue on the day of Badr.

If such an act was considered a sin and Hatib (may Allah be pleased with him) was not excused for it but was still deemed sinful, then how much more severe is it when it comes to disbelief itself?!

Thus, outwardly displaying disbelief or sin without a legitimate excuse makes one liable for accountability based on the apparent act of disbelief or sin.

This distinction in taqiyyah is the fundamental difference between the methodology of Ahl al-Sunnah and the methodology of the Shia regarding taqiyyah. Among the Shia, taqiyyah is the norm, and they permit it without coercion, even for the mere possibility of harm, whether or not such harm is actually realized. In reality, this is nifaq (hypocrisy), not taqiyyah.

Ibn Taymiyyah said:

“Taqiyyah is not about lying and saying with one’s tongue what is not in one’s heart, for that is hypocrisy. Rather, one should act according to what is within their capacity, as mentioned in the authentic hadith from the Prophet (peace be upon him): ‘Whoever among you sees an evil, let him change it with his hand. If he cannot, then with his tongue. If he cannot, then with his heart, and that is the weakest of faith.’”

He also said:

“A believer who is among disbelievers and evildoers is not required to fight them with his hand if he is unable. However, if he can, then he should oppose them with his tongue, and if not, then in his heart. But he should not lie and say with his tongue what is not in his heart. He must either express his faith or keep it hidden. Even then, he does not agree with their religion entirely. At most, he would be like the believer from Pharaoh’s family or Pharaoh’s wife, neither of whom agreed with their people’s entire religion, nor did they lie or say with their tongues what was not

in their hearts. Instead, they simply concealed their faith. Concealing one's religion is one thing, while outwardly displaying a false religion is another matter entirely. The latter is only permitted when one is coerced, in which case uttering a statement of disbelief is excused. Allah has differentiated between a hypocrite and someone who is coerced. The Rafidah (Shia) resemble hypocrites rather than those who are coerced into disbelief while their hearts remain firm in faith."

He further stated:

"Allah permitted a person under coercion to utter disbelief with his tongue if his heart remains firm in faith, unlike the one who openly accepts disbelief. Allah allowed believers to practice taqiyyah (concealment) among disbelievers while forbidding them from forming alliances with them. Ibn Abbas said that taqiyyah is only by the tongue."

From this, we understand that the basis for being excused in concealing one's religion is an actual inability to express it, even if there is no explicit coercion. However, as for openly displaying disbelief or sin, taqiyyah is only permitted when there is clear coercion.

The condition of coercion for outwardly displaying disbelief is supported by numerous evidences, including the statement of Allah:

"Whoever disbelieves in Allah after having believed—except for one who is forced while his heart is secure in faith—but those who willingly open their hearts to disbelief, upon them is the wrath of Allah, and they will have a great punishment. That is because they preferred the worldly life over the Hereafter, and Allah does not guide the disbelieving people."

[Surah An-Nahl 16:106-107]

Muhammad ibn Abdul-Wahhab explained the evidence in this verse by stating:

"Allah did not excuse anyone except the coerced person, provided that his heart remained firm in faith. As for anyone else, they disbelieved after having believed, whether they did so out of fear, diplomacy, attachment to their homeland, concern for their family, tribe, or wealth, or even in jest or for any other worldly reason—except for the one who was coerced. This verse proves this in two ways:

First: 'Except for one who is forced,' meaning Allah only made an exception for the coerced person.

It is well known that a person can only be coerced into speaking or acting, for no one can be coerced into believing something in their heart.

Second: 'That is because they preferred the worldly life over the Hereafter,' meaning that their disbelief and punishment were not due to a corrupt belief, ignorance, hatred of religion, or love of disbelief, but rather because they had a personal worldly interest in it, which they prioritized over their religion."

For this reason, when some people in Mecca had uttered the Shahadah (testimony of faith) yet supported the polytheists without coercion, Allah did not excuse them. Instead, He judged them as hypocrites and disbelievers and clarified this to the Muslims by saying:

"What is the matter with you that you are divided into two groups regarding the hypocrites? Allah has cast them back (to disbelief) because of what they earned. Do you wish to guide those whom Allah has led astray? And whoever Allah leaves astray—you will never find for him a way. They wish that you disbelieve as they disbelieved so that you would be equal. So do not take them as allies until they emigrate in the way of Allah. But if they turn away, then seize them and kill them wherever you find them, and do not take any of them as allies or helpers."

[Surah An-Nisa 4:88-89]

Ibn Kathir said: "(Al-Awfi reported from Ibn Abbas: This verse was revealed concerning a group of people who were in Mecca and had spoken of Islam, yet they supported the polytheists. They left Mecca in pursuit of some need and said: 'If we encounter Muhammad's companions, we will have no trouble from them.' When the believers were informed that they had left Mecca, a faction of the believers said: 'March against these cowards and kill them, for they support your enemy against you.' Another faction of the believers said: 'Glory be to Allah! (or words to that effect), will you kill people who have spoken as you have spoken? Just because they did not migrate and leave their homes, should their blood and wealth be considered lawful?' Thus, they were divided into two factions, and the Messenger did not prohibit either faction from their stance. Then the verse was revealed: 'What is [the matter] with you that you are two groups concerning the hypocrites, while Allah has made them revert [to disbelief] for what they have earned? Do you wish to guide those whom Allah has sent astray? And whomever Allah sends astray—never will you find for him a way.' [An-Nisa: 88]." This was reported by Ibn Abi Hatim, and a similar narration was reported from Abu Salama bin Abdur-Rahman, Ikrimah, Mujahid, Ad-Dahhak, and others."

These people, when they supported and allied with the polytheists, their outward declaration of Islam did not benefit them, because what they did was not taqiyyah due to compulsion, but rather

a choice they made. Therefore, they had no excuse. Based on this principle, the verse on taqiyyah should be understood, which is Allah's saying:

"Let not the believers take the disbelievers as allies instead of the believers. And whoever [of you] does that has nothing with Allah, except when taking precaution against them in prudence. And Allah warns you of Himself." [Aal Imran: 28].

Ibn Jarir said: "The meaning of this is: Do not take—O believers—the disbelievers as supporters and allies, assisting them against the Muslims, instead of the believers, and do not inform them of their weaknesses. For whoever does that has nothing with Allah, meaning he has disassociated himself from Allah, and Allah has disassociated Himself from him due to his apostasy from his religion and entering into disbelief. Except if you fear from them a danger, in which case you may show allegiance to them with your tongues while keeping enmity toward them in your hearts. But do not follow their religion, nor assist them against a Muslim in any way."

Ibn Atiyyah said: "This prohibition is regarding what a person outwardly expresses. As for what he holds in his heart and intention, no true believer would do that.

And those being prohibited here have already been affirmed as believers, so the prohibition refers to expressing kindness to the disbelievers and inclining toward them. The wording of the verse is general and applies to all times."

Ash-Shanqiti said: "This noble verse clarifies all the other verses that categorically prohibit alliance with disbelievers, and it explains that this prohibition applies in situations of choice. However, in cases of fear and precaution, it is permitted to show allegiance to them only to the extent necessary to ward off their harm. It is also a condition that the heart remains free from actual loyalty to them."

Thus, the meaning of the verse is that supporting the polytheists and allying with them is absolute disbelief, whether it is done through speech or action, except in the case of taqiyyah. However, taqiyyah in this matter is not merely due to fear and the anticipation of harm, but only in cases of actual compulsion.

Here, there is a distinction between taqiyyah by concealing one's faith—which can be excused merely due to fear of harm—and displaying disbelief, which is only permitted under actual compulsion, not just fear or expectation of harm.

For this reason, Allah forbade alliance with the People of the Book and made it clear that allying with them—even out of fear—is disbelief. Allah says:

“O you who have believed, do not take the Jews and the Christians as allies. They are [in fact] allies of one another. And whoever is an ally to them among you—then indeed, he is one of them. Indeed, Allah does not guide the wrongdoing people. You see those in whose hearts is disease hastening to them, saying, ‘We fear that a misfortune may strike us.’ But perhaps Allah will bring conquest or a decision from Him, and they will become regretful over what they concealed in themselves.” [Al-Ma’idah: 52].

Allah did not accept mere fear of the possibility that disbelievers might gain power as an excuse for allying with them. Rather, He judged those who allied with them and justified it out of fear to be disbelievers like them. Then, He clarified that only those with the disease of hypocrisy in their hearts would do so.